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Boeing's HQ in KL

Eirmalasare Bani

BOEING has set up its first South-East Asian headquarters at the Petronas Twin Towers to work closely with the region's aerospace industry, armed forces and leading airlines.

The company yesterday named Paul Walters to the new position of regional vice-president, South-East Asia, to lead the Kuala Lumpur-based office and expand Boeing's presence in the region.

The office is one of Boeing's major commitments in Malaysia to date, apart from its venture in Kedah-based Asian Composite Manufacturing Sdn Bhd.

In an interview with Business Times recently, Walters said the Kuala Lumpur office is Boeing's only headquarters for the region, which includes Singapore, Thailand and Indonesia.

"There is one in Hong Kong covering China and North Asia, but this is our South-East Asian base," he said.

Walters said Boeing has now diversified and does not confine its business to just manufacturing airplanes.

"This is why we are here. We want to find what we can do and seek new partners that we can go into business with," he added.

Prior to the new appointment, Walters was the vice-president for Asia at Boeing Space Systems International Service Company, the international marketing division of Boeing Satellite Systems and a subsidiary of The Boeing Co.

Previously he was attached with Hughes Space and Communications, which Boeing bought in 2000.

The regional office is a follow-up from Boeing chairman and chief executive officer Philip M Condit's visit to the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) in May last year.

"The MSC is attractive to us. It was the second place our chairman visited after Prime Minister Datuk Seri Mahathir Mohamad's office. Condit then assigned some people to follow through on that as he would like to have an MSC address," Walters said.

The plan, however, slowed down after the September 11 attacks in the US but Boeing has recently approached some MSC companies to look for software that can be applied in the company.

The approach was done through Phantom Works, the research and development unit of Boeing, Walters said.

The Kuala Lumpur office is also part of Boeing's Integrated Defense Systems, a US\$23 billion (US\$1 = RM3.80) business merging the company's total space, defence, government, intelligent and communications capabilities into one business unit.

Integrated Defense Systems will provide battlespace solutions for military services as well as commercial satellite and launch customers.